

الهيئة الوطنية  
للمؤهلات وصنمان جودة التعليم والتدريب  
National Authority for Qualifications &  
Quality Assurance of Education & Training



# **Directorate of Higher Education Reviews**

## **Programmes-within-College Reviews Report**

**Bachelor in Accounting  
College of Administrative Sciences  
Applied Science University  
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date Reviewed: 26-28 May 2014**

HC036-C2-R036

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## Acronyms

ASU	Applied Science University
BA	Bachelor in Accounting
BAF	Bachelor in Accounting and Finance
BBA	Bachelor in Business Administration
BMIS	Bachelor in Management of Information Systems
BPS	Bachelor in Political Science
CAS	College of Administrative Sciences
CILOs	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
GPA	Grade Point Average
HEC	Higher Education Council of the Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Bahrain
HoD	Head of Department
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
MAF	Master in Accounting and Finance
MBA	Master in Business Administration
MHR	Master in Human Resources
MIS	Management Information Systems
MCQs	Multiple-Choice Questions
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes

QA	Quality Assurance
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre
QQA	National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SIS	Student Information System

# 1. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

## 1.1 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework

To meet the need to have a robust external quality assurance system in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR) of the National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training (QQA) has developed and is implementing two external quality review processes, namely: Institutional Reviews and Programmes-within-College Reviews which together will give confidence in Bahrain's higher education system nationally, regionally and internationally.

Programmes-within-College Reviews have three main objectives:

- to provide decision-makers (in the higher education institutions, the QQA, the Higher Education Council (HEC), students and their families, prospective employers of graduates and other stakeholders) with evidence-based judgements on the quality of learning programmes
- to support the development of internal quality assurance processes with information on emerging good practices and challenges, evaluative comments and continuing improvement
- to enhance the reputation of Bahrain's higher education regionally and internationally.

The *four* indicators that are used to measure whether or not a programme meets international standards are as follows:

### **Indicator 1: The Learning Programme**

*The programme demonstrates fitness for purpose in terms of mission, relevance, curriculum, pedagogy, intended learning outcomes and assessment.*

### **Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme**

*The programme is efficient in terms of the admitted students, the use of available resources - staffing, infrastructure and student support.*

### **Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates**

*The graduates of the programme meet academic standards compatible with equivalent programmes in Bahrain, regionally and internationally.*

### **Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance**

*The arrangements in place for managing the programme, including quality assurance, give confidence in the programme.*

The Review Panel (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Panel’) states in the Review Report whether the programme satisfies each Indicator. If the programme satisfies all four Indicators, the concluding statement will say that there is ‘confidence’ in the programme.

If two or three Indicators are satisfied, including Indicator 1, the programme will receive a ‘limited confidence’ judgement. If one or no Indicator is satisfied, or Indicator 1 is not satisfied, the judgement will be ‘no confidence’, as shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Criteria for Judgements**

Criteria	Judgement
All four Indicators satisfied	Confidence
Two or three Indicators satisfied, including Indicator 1	Limited Confidence
One or no Indicator satisfied	No Confidence
All cases where <b>Indicator 1</b> is not satisfied	

## 1.2 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at the Applied Science University

A Programmes-within-College review of the College of Administrative Sciences (CAS) was conducted by the DHR of the QQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain. The site visit took place on May 26-28 2014 for academic programmes offered by CAS, these are Bachelor in Accounting and Finance (BAF), Bachelor in Accounting (BA), Bachelor in Business Administration (BBA), Bachelor in Political Science (BPS), Bachelor in Management of Information Systems (BMIS), Master in Accounting and Finance (MAF), Master in Business Administration (MBA), and Master in Human Resources (MHR) programs.

This report provides an account of the review process and the findings of the Panel for the BA programme based on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and appendices submitted by the Applied Science University (ASU), the supplementary documentation made available during the site visit, as well as interviews and observations made during the review site visit.

ASU was notified by the DHR/QQA on 24 October 2013 that it would be subject to a Programmes-within-College reviews of the academic programmes offered by the College of Administrative Sciences. On 3 March 2014, ASU was informed that the exact date of the site visit will be 26-28 May 2014. In preparation for the review, ASU

conducted a self-evaluation of all its programmes and submitted the SERs with appendices on the agreed date in 27 February 2014.

DHR constituted a Panel consisting of experts in the academic field Business Administrations, Accounting, Finance, Political Sciences, management of Information Systems, and in higher education who have experience of external programme quality reviews. The Panel comprised 10 external reviewers.

This Report records the evidence-based conclusions reached by the Panel based on:

- (i) analysis of the Self-Evaluation Report and supporting materials submitted by the institution prior to the external peer-review visit
- (ii) analysis derived from discussions with various stakeholders (faculty members, students, graduates and employers)
- (iii) analysis based on additional documentation requested and presented to the Panel during the site visit.

It is expected that ASU will use the findings presented in this report to strengthen its BA programme. DHR recognizes that quality assurance is the responsibility of the higher education institution itself. Hence, it is the right of ASU to decide how it will address the recommendations contained in the Review Report. Nevertheless, three months after the publication of this Report, ASU is required to submit to DHR an improvement plan in response to the recommendations.

DHR would like to extend its thanks to ASU for the co-operative manner in which it has participated in the Programmes-within-College review process. It also wishes to express its appreciation for the open discussions held in the course of the review and the professional conduct of the faculty in ASU.

### **1.3 Overview of the College of Administrative Sciences**

The College of Administrative Sciences (CAS) is one of three colleges within ASU. The Programme Handbook 2013-2015 of the College states that the College was established in 2005 with the mission to meet the needs of Bahrain community and the region for specialised and qualified cadres in administrative sciences, business administration, accounting, finance, management information system and political sciences.

The College currently comprises four departments, namely: The Business Administration, the Accounting and Finance, the Management Information Systems, and the Political Science departments, and offers five undergraduate programmes (Bachelor in Business Administration, Bachelor in Accounting, Bachelor in Accounting and Finance, Bachelor in Management Information System, Bachelor in

Political Science) and three postgraduate programmes (Master in Business Administration, Master in Human Resources Management, Master in Accounting and Finance) across the four departments.

The College employs 34 teaching staff members of which 30 are full-time faculty members. The SER indicate that the total number of students registered in the College during the academic year 2012-2013 was 1,137.

#### 1.4 Overview of the Bachelor in Accounting Programme

The Bachelor in Accounting (BA) programme is managed by the Department of Accounting and Finance, and has been offered since the academic year 2005–2006. Initially, the programme was based on a similar programme offered by the Applied Science Private University in Jordan. The programme has gone through a number of reviews the last of which has resulted on a revised curriculum implemented in the academic year 2013-2014. The formal language used as the media of instruction is the Arabic language. There are five full-time and two part-time faculty members with degrees in Accounting contributing directly to the delivery of this programme. In addition, there are six faculty members with different specializations, who are contributing indirectly to the programme.

#### 1.5 Summary of Review Judgements

**Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Bachelor in Accounting**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
1: The Learning Programme	Satisfies
2: Efficiency of the Programme	Satisfies
3: Academic Standards of the Graduates	Satisfies
4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance	Satisfies
<b>Overall Judgement</b>	<b>Confidence</b>

## 2. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

*The programme demonstrates fitness for purpose in terms of mission, relevance, curriculum, pedagogy, intended learning outcomes and assessment.*

- 2.1 The Bachelor in Accounting (BA) programme has clearly stated aims and objectives that are linked well to the university and college mission and vision statements. The Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) are mapped to the programme aims and clearly meet the norms expected for the discipline and the level of the degree. The Panel appreciates that the programme aims and objectives are aligned to the college and the university mission and vision statements and meet the norms expected for the discipline.
- 2.2 The BA programme consists of 135 credit hours distributed across 45 courses as follows: 27 credit hours (9 courses) university requirements, 27 credit hours (9 courses) college compulsory requirements, 75 credit hours (25 course) programme compulsory requirements and six credit hours (2 courses) programme elective courses. The Panel notes that the programme team has conducted a major revision of the curriculum, which resulted in significant improvements that were implemented on the academic year 2013-2014. These improvements address problems associated with programme structure, the programme and Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) and course contents. The Panel met with the senior management team who provided a clear explanation of the improvements that were incorporated in the BA programme and its relevance to the regional and local needs. Moreover, during interview sessions students informed the Panel that these improvements have enriched the curriculum with useful topics, such as ethics in accounting, governance, international auditing, and international accounting. The Panel acknowledges this effort however; the curriculum does not show how to achieve the programme objective no. 4, 'prepare students to be able to study for accounting professional certificates'. The Panel recommends that the College assess its students' readiness to set for accounting professional certificates and investigate ways to incorporate professional courses and certificates in the curriculum .
- 2.3 In general, the BA curriculum is well designed to ensure suitable workload and year-on-year progression. The curriculum provides a structured academic progression through the set of prerequisites. However, the Panel notes that the sequence through which the two courses 'Audit 433' and 'International Auditing Standards 332' appear on the curriculum plan does not support the student learning progression as basic audit courses should be offered prior to advanced audit courses. The Panel encourages the Department to revise the sequence through which the two courses 'Audit 433' and 'International Auditing Standards 332' appear on the curriculum plan. Moreover, the Panel notes that the list of programme elective courses includes a

number of courses from non-accounting areas such as BA102 (Fundamentals on Administration), FIN353 (Investment and Fund management) and FIN454 (International Trading and Funding), which is not a common practice. The Panel urges the College to address this. The semester workload is acceptable (ranging from 15 to 18 credit hours) and corresponds with international norms. Knowledge and skills, developed through the programme structure and within each course, are appropriately balanced and there is a balance between theory and practice. During interview sessions, the Panel noted that the programme team and students are satisfied with the curriculum and the allocated workload. The Panel appreciates that the curriculum provides a structured academic progression through the set of prerequisites and a balance between theory and practice.

- 2.4 Generally, course syllabi are well designed and presented to meet the norms and standards of the accounting disciplinary. The Panel notes the use of a standard template for course syllabi. The course specifications template currently used by the BA programme is informative for linking course materials to the course learning outcomes and contains the basic information needed such as the CILOs, teaching methods, assessment methods, the timetable, and the resources to be used. However, it is missing information on the instructor teaching a course (e.g.: the instructor's name, office location, contact information office hours). The Panel suggests to include these information in the course specification. The BA curriculum plan includes courses such as 'Islamic Accounting ACC340' that suit and serve the local and regional environments. The Panel appreciates that the course syllabi is relevant to the degree of the BA programme and its expected outcomes and is contextualized to meet local and regional needs. Nonetheless, from the SER and meeting conducted with the BA staff during the site visit, it was claimed that staff members are using some published research papers in the teaching process to ensure currency with recent professional findings. However, through students' interviews and scrutinizing of the materials provided, the Panel did not see evidence of such research papers being used in the teaching process. The Panel recommends that the Department ensure the usage of published research papers in some courses to enrich the syllabus of the BA programme and support its currency.
- 2.5 The Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) are expressed in the programme specifications. There are 20 PILOs divided into four categories: knowledge and understanding (A1-A7); subject-specific skills (B1-B4); critical thinking skills (C1-C6); general and transferrable skills (D1-D3). The Panel appreciates the BA programme administration's efforts in reviewing, assessing, and developing the curriculum plan including its PILOs based on benchmarking with other universities (local, regional and international) and the consultation of external reviewers. The Panel studied the PILOs and appreciates that these are aligned with

the college's mission and the programme aims and are appropriate to the degree type and level.

- 2.6 Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) are described for the individual courses and stated in each course specification. The CILOs are mapped to the PILOs using the Curriculum Skills Map which in turn are mapped to the overall programme aims and the graduates attributes. The Panel scrutinized the CILOs in the provided samples of course files and the mapping matrix provided, and notes that in general the CILOs are appropriate to the course syllabi. During interviews with staff members, the Panel found that they are knowledgeable about both the procedures for doing this and the rationale for the approach. The Panel notes the care exerted by the academic staff to ensure that the CILOs are appropriate for the programme through the mapping with programme aims, PILOs and graduate attributes. However, the Panel notes that the mapping of the CILOs to the PILOs includes some exaggeration. For example, 40 out of a total of 45 courses in the BA programme are serving (D2). The Panel recommends that the College revise the mapping of courses to programme ILOs to resolve these issues.
- 2.7 The BA programme includes a three credits internship course (ACC461) which is required for all students. Students who completed 90 credits are eligible to register in the internship course. There is a training coordinator for the entire College who manages and facilitates the internship course for all students. The inclusion of such a course is in line with international good practice. The Panel notes with appreciation the comprehensive internship rules and procedures that are implemented to ensure a complete follow-up from both industry and academic supervisors, where 50% of the grade is assessed by the industry supervisor and 50% by the academic adviser based on a pre-developed rubric. There is evidence of an effective follow-up mechanism to assure that the internship matches the needs for achieving the mapped PILOs and address any further challenges for the students during the internship period. During interviews with the internship coordinator, the Panel learned that the coordinator ensures that a site visit is conducted for all students in the training field. However, the Panel suggests that the College increase the number of faculty members assigned for these visits to ensure that a sufficient number of site visits are conducted with both the industry supervisor and the student for in depth discussion of any problem arising or areas for improvements.
- 2.8 There is a clear policy for teaching and learning that is implemented. The policy encourages the use of a wide variety of teaching and learning methods to achieve the learning outcomes. Course specifications indicate the type of teaching and learning methods used to deliver different parts of the syllabi and link these to the CILOs. The Panel notes from the interviews that the policy is communicated well to the faculty members and students. From the submitted course files and interviews conducted

during the site visit, the Panel notes that lectures are the primary way in which courses are delivered. However, most these lectures show some level of students' participation in the learning process. The use of in-class exercises and case studies whenever appropriate is evident in some of the course files. Moreover, there is evidence from the course files that accounting courses encourage group-work methods through group discussions, or projects. During interview sessions, students expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the teaching methods currently used in the BA programme. The Panel appreciates this variance in the teaching and learning methods to support the achievements of the course intended learning outcomes and the programme aims and outcomes.

- 2.9 ASU has implemented a Moodle platform to support the learning process. The Moodle system is used for uploading courses materials, chatting and making announcements. There are periodic reports about the usage of the Moodle which shows significant increase in the adoption of Moodle by faculty members. Nonetheless, the Panel notes that it is not fully utilised as a learning management system that can encourage independent learning. The Panel recommends that the College investigate ways to incorporate independent learning in the curriculum through the usage of Moodle.
- 2.10 The BA programme has a written policy for assessment which is well communicated to the faculty members and the students. There is clear guidelines for grade distribution, setting examination papers and grading mechanism. The Panel also notes the documented policy for plagiarism and copyrights protections. The policy is implemented consistency across all courses as evident from the course files. There is an appeal procedure in place that ensures fairness of students grading that faculty and students are well informed of. There is evidence from the submitted examination papers and assessments in the course files that students are provided with feedback on their work that helps to improve their performance; in particular the feedback on the midterm examination scripts. During the meetings with the teaching staff, it was evident that they are well aware of the assessment policies and current assessment methods and the role that these policies play in assessing the students' achievements. Interviewed students were also aware of the current assessment methods used in the programme and their implications. There is also examination committee on the department level that revises assessments and grade distribution before publishing them. Moreover, the committee studies the feedback from the external examiners and submit its recommendations for improvement to the Department Council. The Panel appreciates the clearly stated and communicated assessment and feedback arrangements. The university assessment policy stipulates a grade distribution that is uniform for all courses, 30% for midterm examination, 50% for final examination and 20% for other methods of assessment. As all courses are not always of the same nature, the Panel recommends that the University revise the current grade

distribution policy and develop more flexible policy based on the course level and nature. This will maintain the academic freedom needed to decide what is the best weighting of assessment to a given course content and objective.

2.11 In coming to its conclusion regarding The Learning Programme, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

- The programme aims, objectives and learning outcomes are aligned to the college and the university mission and vision statements and meet the norms expected for the discipline.
- The curriculum provides a structured academic progression through the set of prerequisites and a balance between theory and practice.
- The course syllabi is relevant to the degree and its expected outcome and is contextualised to meet local and regional needs.
- The programme intended learning outcomes are aligned with the college mission and the programme aims, appropriate to the degree and benchmarked externally.
- There are clear rules and procedures for the internship programme to ensure appropriate delivery and achievement of PILOs.
- A variety of teaching methods is utilised to support the achievement of the course intended learning outcomes.
- There is clear assessment policy and procedures that both staff and students are informed well of.

2.12 In terms of improvement the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- investigate ways to incorporate professional courses and certificates in the curriculum in line with the stated programme objective
- revise the list of programme elective courses to ensure that all courses listed are from advanced accounting areas
- enrich the syllabus of the programme and ensure its currency through the usage of published research papers within courses' contents
- revise the mapping of courses to the programme intended learning outcomes to avoid exaggeration
- investigate ways to incorporate independent learning in the curriculum through the usage of the available e-learning platform
- revise the current grade distribution policy and develop more flexible policy based in the course level and nature.

2.13 **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **The Learning Programme**.

### 3. Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

*The programme is efficient in terms of the admitted students, the use of available resources - staffing, infrastructure and student support.*

- 3.1 The University has a clear admission policy and procedure which are published on the university website, in the University Catalogue, and in the Programme Handbook. A detailed admission procedure is contained in an Admission and Registration policy document. The admission policy stipulates a score of at least 60% in high school. Students with less than 60% can be eligible if they have at least one year of experience to the field of the programme and pass a personal interview. The University has also defined that only 5% of the students are allowed to be admitted in the programme based on the exception rule. Moreover, ASU has a clear policy for accepting transferred students from other institutes. The Panel appreciates the transparency of the admission policy for newly admitted and transferred students.
- 3.2 The Panel studied the profiles of the admitted students and noted that these in general meet the set criteria. All students are required to perform an English language test before commencing the study in the programme. Depending on their performance in the placement test, students are requested to attend different English language courses offered by ASU. Students who achieve (0 – 40) in the placement test are required to attend an orientation programme and then advance to the other English courses in the programme, students who achieve (41 – 79) must register in two courses (English 1 and English 2), and students who achieve (80 – 100) are required to register in English 2 only. However, the Panel notes that there is some inconsistency in the students concerning their English language skills and this should be monitored to maintain a satisfactory level of competency in English. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College revise the effectiveness of its English language placement test and the exit level of its English courses. Moreover, as mathematics and statistics are particularly important for accounting students, it is recommended that students, especially those who are coming from the art track of high school, set for a placement test in mathematics to assess their competency level.
- 3.3 The programme management lies between the Head of Department (HoD) and the Programme Coordinator. There are clear roles defined for the Programme Coordinator. Moreover, the HoD also has defined roles and responsibilities for running the programme. Furthermore, individual courses are managed by assigned course coordinators who coordinate the teaching and learning activities in multi-sections. There is a functioning academic committee structure, which includes a University, College and Department Council, Programme and Curriculum Review Committee and Examinations Committee. The Panel studied samples of minutes of meetings of different committees and councils and found several evidence of the

functioning of these committees and councils. The Panel notes with appreciation the active engagement of students within the programme management. A representative from the programme attends the Department Council meetings and is encouraged to participate in the discussions relevant to students' affairs and require students' views. The Panel appreciates that there are clear lines of responsibility and accountability embedded in the structures and processes surrounding the programme management.

- 3.4 There is a total of 10 faculty members contributing to the delivery of the programme. The Panel studied the CVs provided and notes that out of the 10 faculty members, there are four PhD holders with accounting specialization serve the programme directly, two part-time staff; one with PhD in accounting and the other with a Master degree in accounting. The other six faculty members, whom contribute partially to the delivery of the programme, have different specialization in economic, management, finance, Islamic banking, and accounting information system. The Panel is satisfied that the number of accounting staff directly serving the programme is sufficient to the number of students registered and that the faculty members are qualified to deliver the BA programme. However, these faculty members contribute to the delivery of other undergraduate and graduate programmes, increasing the actual load of each faculty member. In this situation, it becomes difficult to be current in the field, develop new teaching methods, and contribute to the community. Studying the provided teaching staff load and through interviews with staff and students, the Panel notes that some faculty members, especially newly recruited, are teaching six or seven sections in different subjects, this leads to difficulties in preparing course materials and publishing research papers. The Panel recommends that the College revisit the working load of the faculty members, especially those in their first year at ASU, to provide them with the needed time to develop their teaching materials and methods and progress with their research activities in line with ASU's strategy.
- 3.5 The Panel appreciates the efforts exerted by the faculty members to maintain a stream of research publications in peer-reviewed journals and the incentives offered by ASU to staff members who publish their research papers. During interviews with senior faculty members, the Panel learned of a useful mechanism for encouraging junior staff to participate in research and publication, where they are mentored in writing research publications by senior academics in the early stages of their careers as evident from the collaborative research. The Panel appreciates the professionalism of the academic staff and their commitment to the successful delivery of relevant research in a collaborative manner.
- 3.6 ASU has a Central Human Resources Department that is responsible for the development and implementation of policies relating to recruitment, appraisal and

promotion of faculty. The Panel confirmed during interviews that the Department is responsible for identifying requirements for new faculty members by developing an annual plan based on projected student intakes. The department's involvement in the recruitment process includes short-listing candidates in departmental meetings. The candidates on the short list are then interviewed by a committee that includes the HoD and two other faculty members. The committee's recommendations are then forwarded to the Dean for approval, and thereafter passed on to the HR Department for final processing to ensure compliance with the ASU appointment procedures. The Panel confirmed during interviews with the staff that the Employee Evaluation Policy includes appraisal of academic staff. Moreover, interviews with the academic staff revealed that a Staff Promotion Policy has been developed recently, and hence there has not been any academic staff promotions in recent years. The Panel recommends that the University implement the newly-developed Staff Promotion Policy to ensure the retention of the highly qualified staff.

- 3.7 There is a functioning induction process for the newly appointed staff. During interviews with faculty members, the Panel learned that the induction programme for newcomers involves introduction about the university services, such as Moodle, the library, and the IT services. It also covers presentations about HR and finance, academic, and registration and admission policies. The top management participates in the induction to emphasize the university's vision, mission, objectives, and organization chart. Before commencing teaching classes, both full-time and part-time staff members learn about the assessment policy and other academic policies. Current staff members expressed their satisfaction with these arrangements to the Panel. The Panel appreciates the arrangements in place to prepare new recruited staff.
- 3.8 ASU has a functioning Management Information System (MIS) and a Student Information System (SIS) which together provide means for maintaining students records with respect to admissions and registrations, faculty time-tabling, examination marks entry and processing of results. The SIS enables academic staff to enter examination marks directly into the system and is used to generate a host of reports for management decision making. Students confirmed that they have restricted access to the system *via* a secured login protocol and are able to access their examination results and academic records online. The Panel observed a physical demonstration of the SIS during the campus tour and noticed that there are sufficient security features to ensure the integrity of the system. Interviews with some support staff and academics confirmed that the reports they receive from the system are adequate for their needs, and allow for effective identification and monitoring of 'at-risk' students. Evidence was provided of how the SIS is used effectively as a communication tool between at-risk students and their academic advisors. The Panel

is satisfied with the use of the MIS and SIS to support teaching and learning and to aid decision-making.

- 3.9 ASU has policies and procedures in place to ensure the security of learners' information. Users are provided with a unique user-name and password for logging into the system. The demonstration during the site visit confirmed that all passwords are encrypted and pass along a firewall path through a server to the database. All marks that are entered into the system are printed and reviewed independently by an assigned faculty member before submission to the HoD for approval, and thereafter to the Dean for authentication. An additional validation procedure is performed by the Registration Department through a 'secondary marks entry' after which the marks and results are confirmed on the system to be accessed online by students. The Panel confirmed from interviews with the IT staff that ASU has a Disaster Recovery Plan in terms of which data from the SIS is backed up periodically to a remote site to forestall any potential loss of data through disasters such as fire. The Panel appreciates the rigour of the implemented procedures to ensure the security of learner information and accuracy of results.
- 3.10 The Panel toured the university campus and visited the teaching halls, laboratories, staff offices, the bookstore, praying spaces, the health clinic, the main food court, the student activity hall, the study spaces and other facilities. There are seven computer laboratories with 154 computers, and 46 teaching halls equipped with data shows that are utilised by the University as a whole. The Panel acknowledges the suitability of the physical and material resources available. The Panel toured the library and noted with appreciation the well-structured library with private study space available for students, conveniently placed LCDs to aid in allocating books, as well as online journals, periodicals and databases in both English and Arabic languages. The Panel studied the library holdings and noted that it supplies the accounting programmes with 789 titles for accounting and finance and 64 periodicals in accounting. The Panel encourages the College to continue increasing the library's holdings especially those in Arabic language as the programme teaching media is Arabic. During the touring session, the Panel met with qualified staff in the library, who explained the services provided to help and advice BA students on the utilisation of the library resources. The library is open daily from 8:00am to 8:00pm except Friday from 2:00pm to 8:00pm. In addition, the Panel visited some computer laboratories and noted that the College provides technical staff to monitor the laboratories during class time. This support helps the lecturer to maintain the quality of teaching without being concerned about technical problems that can emerge during study hours. The Panel noted that within the laboratories allocation there are free hours that are posted on the door where students can have access to the facilities to perform research and solve their homework. During the site visit, the Panel learned that the University provides internet, Wi-Fi and email services,

troubleshooting support, software installation, and access to the university services to all students and faculty members. The Panel appreciates that ASU has good facilities to support the students' learning experiences.

- 3.11 The Panel notes that ASU is using the attendance sheets to track the resources in the laboratories. The ICT unit produces a report on the usage of computers in the laboratories, which is used by the Department for resources planning. The library information system provides tracking of usage of library e-resources, and produces reports to the Department and the College to revise the usage of resources. In addition, the e-learning system (Moodle) offers reports on its usage. The Panel notes the availability of the different tracking mechanisms and recommends that the College establish a comprehensive resource tracking system to track usage by students and staff and utilise its outcome to support decision-making.
- 3.12 As stated earlier, there are arrangements in place to provide support for students in the laboratories and for the use of e-resources. This is represented by having the technical support unit for the University, staff in the library, the teacher in the laboratory and the teaching assistants in the College. In addition, ASU has a social care unit headed by a university staff member and an academic advisor for advising on academic issues. During the touring session, the Panel was informed about the services delivered by the social care unit of the Student Support Centre in order to address non-academic students' challenges. The Panel viewed the files of some cases where students' problems were resolved through consultation with the social care unit. During interview sessions, the Panel found that students are complimentary about the support systems in place. In particular, current students are appreciative of the proactive support they receive. The Panel appreciates the arrangements in place and the support system provided by the academic advisors, the library, the student care unit, and the IT unit with qualified staff members.
- 3.13 An orientation and induction programme is offered at the commencement of each semester under the auspices of the Deanship of Student Affairs, where opportunity is provided for all new students, including transferring students, to undertake a campus tour to familiarise themselves with the university facilities and to be introduced to the administrative and academic staff. The Panel is pleased to note the active involvement of the Student Council and senior students, as well as academic advisors, in the orientation process. Training on the use of library resources is conducted also during the orientation process. The Panel considers that the face-to-face orientation day is very helpful in preparing students for their studies, and is additionally pleased that efforts are made to provide material online for the benefit of those who are unable to physically attend the orientation sessions. Students confirmed the orientation process during the interview sessions, and added that course tutors in their first contact sessions demonstrate the use of the web portal to

access the requisite course material. There is also arrangements in place for transferred students to prepare them for joining ASU and inform them about the complete transferring process and the number of transferred credits. The Panel appreciates the arrangements in place for the students orientation programme.

- 3.14 At-risk students are defined as those with accumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of less than 60%. According to the ASU student at risk policy, students should be monitored before their GPA reaches 60%. Therefore, all those students with accumulative GPA reaching 62% are monitored closely by their advisors. These students are prevented from registering online and are compelled to seek academic advice. The academic advisor has access to individual student records on the SIS and a form has to be filled. An action plan is developed by the student under the supervision of the advisor in order to identify the challenges faced by the student and the ways to address these. The advisor monitors the student on frequent bases and records the progress made, and the results of the discussion. During interview sessions, students confirmed that these meetings have helped them in better organising their study plan. The BA programme management allocates two hours per course per week as office hours and students are made aware of staff office hours by posting them on staff office doors. These mechanisms in place helped the Department in reducing the number of students at risk. The Panel appreciates the mechanism in place to support at-risk students.
- 3.15 Students participate in visits to organizations in the Kingdom of Bahrain in order to learn about accounting disciplines. The internship, which is a compulsory course, provides a valuable experience for students to be associated with the organization they train in. Moreover, a number of activities are arranged for students and they have recreation facilities on campus with allocated time for female and male students. The Panel acknowledges the annual 'Jobs Fair' day conducted by the Deanship of Student Affairs where students are exposed to potential employers. The Panel notes the current learning environment and suggests extending agreements with other professional organizations for providing more practical experiences for all the BA students. Other physical environment including the library space with proper seating arrangements, cafeteria, computer laboratories, Wi-Fi access, LED monitors all are supporting the students learning environment. The Panel acknowledges the arrangements in place to enrich the students' learning experience.
- 3.16 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Efficiency of the Programme, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- There are clearly stated and transparent admission policy and procedure for the newly admitted and transferred students.
  - There are clear lines of responsibility and accountability embedded in the department structures and processes that encourages students' involvements.

- The academic staff members are professional and committed to the successful delivery of relevant research in a collaborative manner.
- A well-functioning induction process is in place for the newly appointed staff members.
- Rigours policies and procedures are in place to ensure the security of the learners' records and accuracy of results.
- ASU has good facilities to support the students' learning experiences.
- Appropriate support is provided to the students by the library, IT unit and the Social Support Centre.
- There is a well-organized students orientation programme that is conducted to inform and prepare new and transferred students.
- Effective mechanisms are in place to identify and provide academic support for at-risk students.

3.17 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- review the effectiveness of its English language placement test and the exit level of its English courses
- introduce mathematics placement test for new applicants, especially those who are coming from high school art track
- revise the teaching load model used for faculty members, especially those in their first year at ASU
- expedite the implementation of the its newly-developed staff promotion policy to ensure a high retention rate
- establish a comprehensive resource tracking system to track resource usage by students and staff and utilise the outcomes to support decision-making.

### 3.18 **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **Efficiency of the Programme**.

#### **4. Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates**

*The graduates of the programme meet academic standards compatible with equivalent programmes in Bahrain, regionally and internationally.*

- 4.1 The BA graduate attributes are clearly stated and mapped to the programme aims with emphasis on how the graduates from the programme contribute to the community services, develop accounting systems to address local and regional needs, and be independent learners and progress to postgraduates studies. The BA graduates attributes are also mapped to the programme ILOs. The Panel found appropriate usage of assessment tools for the programme ILOs to ensure the achievements of the stated graduates attributes as evident from the sample of the submitted assessments. The Panel found that these attributes are appropriate for the BA graduates and appreciates the alignment of these attributes to the programme aims and PILOs as well as the proper PILOs assessments tools. Notwithstanding the above, the Panel encourages the College to liaise with professional bodies to further improve the quality of outcomes and align it to professional standards in line with the university's mission and type (being an applied university).
- 4.2 There is evidence that the programme is benchmarked to similar programmes offered by local, regional and international institutions. The Department has selected the University of Bahrain as a local university, King Saud and Emam Mohammed in Saudi Arabia, Applied Science, Yarmook, and Moatah in Jordan as regional universities, and Middlesex and Durham as international universities. The Panel notes that not all these benchmarking activities were done through formal partnerships. The Panel recommends that the College formalize partnership agreements with all institutions that the programme want to benchmark against. Recently, a formal benchmarking policy has been developed. The policy requires a clear identification of the purpose of the benchmarking exercise, and the expected outcomes that will be used to enhance the programme, and the frequency of the benchmarking exercise. The Panel finds that the purpose and the choice of what is benchmarked and what it is against are clear and justified as in the submitted documentation. This is appropriate as the target group for students is centred on the local and regional market. The benchmark outcomes are reflected in the noticeably improved curriculum plan as evident in the submitted documentation. The Panel appreciates the benchmarking activities conducted that enriched the BA programme.
- 4.3 Assessment policy and procedures are defined and documented. The objective of having a policy is to enable the programme to achieve the set PILOs. The Panel is pleased that the policy and procedures are implemented consistency across all courses to ensure fair treatments as evident from the course files. During interviews, the Panel learned how the Department and the College monitor the implementation

of the assessment policy and procedures to ensure effectiveness through cooperation between the Quality Assurance Unit and the quality assurance coordinator in the College. The Panel notes that the assessment tools are described in the course specifications, thus students become aware about them. Moreover, The Panel was informed during meetings with students that lecturers explain the assessment policy in the beginning of each course to ensure the students are aware of the assessments tools and the grade distribution. There is evidence from course files and interviews conducted that assessment policies and procedures are consistently implemented, monitored and subject to regular reviews. The programme has a grading policy and assessment tools that are reviewed internally and externally. The external review of the assessment tools have marginal value in ascertaining the suitability of the assessment tools. The Panel appreciates that the assessment policy and procedures are consistently implemented, monitored and subject to regular reviews.

- 4.4 There is a mechanism to ensure that course assessments are tied to the PILOs and CILOs. The course specifications indicate the assessment tools used and the ILOs these intend to assess. Moreover, the lecturer of each course uses an excel sheet template to measure the achievement rate of the ILOs based on the course assessments tools. The rate of 70% and above is considered achieved based on the university assessment policy. The lecturer then documents the outcomes from this sheet and discusses it with the programme coordinator, and suggests alternative assessment tools or any improvements to the Department Council for approval. Moreover, the programme team uses internal and external moderations for the mid-term and final examinations as another measurement tool to ensure the appropriateness of the assessment to achieve the learning outcomes. The Panel acknowledges the mechanism in place to measure the achievement of the ILOs and the continues efforts on aligning and updating the assessments to ensure appropriate assessment of the achievement of the ILOs.
- 4.5 Formal internal moderation of the mid-term and final examinations was adopted first in the academic year 2013-2014. At the beginning of each academic year, the Department forms an examination committee for which all roles and responsibilities are documented. Lecturers submit the examination papers at least 48 hours before the examination to the committee. The committee appoints an internal examiner to ensure the relevance of the questions to the course, the appropriateness of the assessments tools to measure the ILOs, and the distribution of marks. The internal examiner submits a report to the programme coordinator, who collects all the comments and report these to the Department Council for approval. The internal moderator also reviews a sample of the marked scripts (including all failures, scripts with marks above 80%, and some randomly selected scripts) to ensure consistency of grading by the course tutor. The Panel notes that the current internal moderation

does not cover assignments or other assessment tools. The Panel recommends that the College expand the internal moderation system to cover all forms of assessment.

- 4.6 The College states that assessments are subjected to external moderation. However, the submitted documentation, although provides some details on the process, does not include clear explanation about the external moderation. During interview sessions, the programme team explained the mechanism in place for external moderation which has been adopted starting from the second semester of the 2013-2014 academic year and has been implemented on only a sample of courses. Nonetheless, the value added due to this process is evident in the comments provided by the external examiners that, in some cases, led to improvement in the quality of the assessment tool. The Panel recommends that the College expedite the implementation of its external moderation policy and expand it to all courses and assessments that would enable the College to assess the effectiveness of the external moderation process.
- 4.7 The Panel was provided with samples of students' assessed work that were presented to the review team during the site visit. The Panel found that the level of assessments is appropriate for the BA programme. The level of difficulty in the examinations contained in the course files is, in general, acceptable and aligned to typical levels expected in similar programmes. Nonetheless, the Panel is concerned about the over reliance on the use of multiple-choice questions (MCQs) in some courses without having a mechanism that ensures the robustness of this assessment tool. The Panel recommends that the College develop a mechanism to define controls on the usage of MCQs and ensure that this is stated clearly in the university's assessment policy. Moreover, the Panel noted with concern that there is repetition of the same questions across consecutive semesters in some courses of the BA programme. The Panel urges the Department to develop a mechanism to detect such thing and prevent it from happening.
- 4.8 Graduates achievements is measured through direct assessment of CILOs and mapping those to the PILOs; statistics on pass rates for courses and their grade distributions; and reports of internal and external moderation. The Panel reviewed the submitted documentations and inquired during interviews about this process. The College uses 70% or above, which is aligned with other local universities, as the level of achievements required to have a cohort safely achieve a CILO. However, the Panel encourages the College to conduct more in-depth analysis and interpretation of students' results to give additional evidence of meeting these criteria. A second approach is the indirect assessment through alumni and employers surveys to gather information on the level of students' achievements. Interviews with alumni and employees indicated an acceptable level of satisfaction with the level of students' achievements. The Panel notes that the arrangements in place are adequate in

general to assess the programme's graduates achievements. Nonetheless, the Panel notes that whilst the programme follows the American credit system, the pass grade is at 50% score (Grade E) rather than 60% (Grade D) as in most programmes following the American system. The Panel suggests that, in its benchmarking activities, the College benchmark its course and accumulative grades and pass rates in comparison with those of local, regional and international institutions.

- 4.9 The College submitted their cohort analysis to the Panel to allow effective comparison to be made across years. In general, the number of students registered in the BA is relatively low but has sequentially increased over the last three years (six in 2010, eight in 2011, and 14 in 2012). The programme team interviewed during the site visit claimed that this is because of the old curriculum plan, and consequently the number is expected to increase because of the enhanced curriculum adopted in 2013-2014. The programme team also highlighted that the new campus is expected to play a significant role in attracting more students to ASU. The dropout rate has also decreased year by year during the last three years, and it reached 25% on 2011. The Panel appreciates the efforts performed by the College to analyse the cohort data and the actions taken by ASU to ensure improvement in students' retention rate. The progression rates for the programme are within the acceptable range (65.33% of students have completed their degree in 10 semesters or in less than 4 years). The Panel notes that the College is aware of the general students' trends and has investigated the reasons behind it and performed actions to improve it as evidence from the revised curriculum, and the new campus. However, a more deep analysis is encouraged to neutralize the effect of the transferred students on the actual period of studies.
- 4.10 Internship is compulsory for all students registered in the programme. The course worth three credits towards the attainment of the degree and is spread over a minimum of 120 actual hours. It is to be pursued following the completion of at least 90 credits towards the degree. The College has been successful in approaching a significant number of companies in Bahrain who are willing to take in students for the internship period. The Internship Handbook stipulates the architecture of the internship programme. A dedicated internship manager follows up students' progress and is responsible for the communication, coordination and documentation of all internships activities. There is a clear assessment mechanism in place for the internship programme, which is implemented consistently as evident from the submitted documents. Out of the total grade, 50% is allocated for the assessment of the field supervisor at work, and 50% is allocated for the report produced by the students, and the presentation and discussion after completing the internship programme. The Panel encourages the faculty members to get more involved in the internship process and meet regularly with the industry supervisors to discuss concerns during the internship, not at the end of the process. This will help ensure

that the internship serves as an appropriate learning experience for the student and as a viable continued option for the company to maintain. Nonetheless, the Panel is of the view that in general, the internship system works well. Moreover, the students showed a high satisfaction with the internship programme. The Panel appreciates this well-established arrangement for the internship programme.

- 4.11 The College has incorporated a research component into the BA programme 'ACC469' to improve the learning outcomes. This research component is considered the senior year project. There are clear guidelines in the Student Handbook that organize the relationship between students and their supervisors while conducting the research activities. There is also information about plagiarism, submission requirements and overall assessment of the research component. The College uses 'TurnItIn' software to detect plagiarism cases. The Department forms a committee of three faculty members to discuss and assess the final research outcome. The Panel is pleased with the consistence mechanism in place for assessing the research component. During the site visit, the Panel examined the quality of a sample of students' research and was satisfied with its level and outcomes. The Panel found the comments and feedback from the committee very informative. The Panel acknowledges the research component and its role in exposing students to real world cases.
- 4.12 The Panel studied the submitted terms and conditions for establishing the Advisory Board, their responsibilities, roles and mechanism. The Panel found these documentations useful to govern the work of the programme Advisory Board. During the site visit, the Panel met with three members of the programme Advisory Board. The Board members demonstrated interest in the programme and indicated their role in increasing the visibility of the programme, curriculum development, recruitment strategies, and programme marketing. There are evidence that the advice and feedback provided by the Board is utilised by the programme team. This is especially evident in the revised curriculum plan that was adopted during the 2013-2014 academic year. The Panel appreciates the well-functioning Advisory Board and the feedback provided to enrich the programme.
- 4.13 The Panel found evidence of some recent alumni and employer surveys that have been conducted by the College. These however, are not implemented regularly. The Panel interviewed a number of employers whom expressed their satisfaction with the programme graduates. They indicated that the graduates are very competent in terms of analytical, communication, and leadership skills. The Panel notes that stakeholders feedback have been taken into consideration and especially in terms of implementing the suggestions to facilitate the development of the revised curriculum plan and mapping the course to programme ILOs. The Panel recommends that the

College develop and implement a mechanism to systematically gauge their satisfaction with the programme and its outcomes.

4.14 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Academic Standards of the Graduates, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

- The graduate attributes are clearly stated and linked to the programme aims and intended learning outcomes, which are in general properly assessed.
- The programme has been benchmarked with other similar programmes offered locally, regionally and internationally and the outcomes of the benchmarking exercises are used to improve the offerings of the BA programme.
- The assessment policy and procedures are consistently implemented, monitored and subject to regular reviews.
- Cohort data is analysed and actions are taken to ensure improvement in students retention rate.
- Appropriate arrangements are in place for managing and assessing the internship programme.
- There is a well-functioning Advisory Board with clear term of reference.

4.15 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- develop and implement a mechanism to formalize partnership agreement with all institutions that the programme intend to benchmark against
- expand the current internal moderation practice to cover all forms of assessment and expedite the implementation of the external moderation and expand its application to cover all taught courses
- develop and implement a mechanism to define control on the usage of MCQ and ensure that this is stated clearly in the university's assessment policy
- develop and implement a mechanism that prevents repetition of examination questions across semesters
- develop and implement a mechanism to systematically gauge the employers and alumni's satisfaction with the programme and its outcomes.

#### 4.16 **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **Academic Standards of the Graduates**.

## 5. Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

*The arrangements in place for managing the programme, including quality assurance and continuous improvement, contribute to giving confidence in the programme.*

- 5.1 The ASU management system comprises a range of policies and procedures that are mainly included in the recently developed Quality Assurance Manual to provide a 'one-stop shop'. Examples of existing policies and procedures include the Teaching and Learning and Assessment Strategy, Assessment and Feedback Policy, Staff Development Policy, Academic Staff Promotion Policy, Students at-Risk Policy and Programme Review Policy. The Panel met with some academic and administrative staff, including representatives from the department's QA Unit, who confirmed that these policies and procedures are effectively applied and well communicated to both staff and students. During interview sessions, staff members were well informed about these procedures and indicated their involvement in developing them. The Panel appreciates that staff members are familiar with these policies and procedures, and are involved in the development of those that are relevant to their duties.
- 5.2 The BA Programme is managed by the Programme Coordinator and the Head of Department. The Programme Coordinator is supported by the Department Council, Programme and Curriculum Review Committee, Programme Examination Committee, Course Coordinators, the Quality Assurance (QA) Unit within the Department, and the Student Council, which has representatives in departmental meetings. Various venues such as University, College and Department Council meetings are utilised to ensure that the responsibilities of all members involved in the delivery of the programme are executed in an effective manner. The Panel appreciates that the BA programme is managed in a manner that demonstrates effective and responsible leadership.
- 5.3 The Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre (QAAC) has an overall responsibility for ensuring that the programme adheres to the requirements of ASU's quality assurance system. The SER demonstrates a number of ways in which the Department ensures that the quality management system in relation to the BA programme is monitored and evaluated. The quality assurance policy is operationalized at the college and departmental levels *via* the college and departmental QA units, which are overseen by a university-wide QA coordinating group consisting of the QAAC director and the College QA coordinators, among others. For example, the responsibility of the departmental QA units is to ensure that programme and course aims and learning outcomes are appropriately aligned with the assessment methods. In addition, the programme is evaluated annually within the Department, and through a formal review in four year intervals by the

Programme and Curriculum Review Committee to assess their effectiveness and relevance. The Panel appreciates that the quality assurance management system is clearly specified, implemented, monitored, and evaluated across the College.

- 5.4 One of the primary objectives of the QAAC is to inculcate a quality culture among both academic and administrative staff. The Panel was provided with evidence on the QAAC conducting regular events and workshops to acquaint staff with best practice approaches in teaching and learning and inviting facilitators from other higher education institutions in Bahrain to exchange good practices. Policies and procedures relating to quality assurance are made available on the university intranet for easy access by staff. Both academic and support staff interviewed showed a clear understanding of the quality management arrangements and their role in ensuring the quality of the provision. The Panel appreciates the commitment of the faculty to the quality assurance the programme even with the high teaching and administrative load.
- 5.5 The Self-Evaluation Report states that ASU has a laid down procedure for the development of new programmes which includes 'informal benchmarking, market research and feedback from academic experts'. There is also an acknowledgement in the SER that the procedure needs to include a 'more systematic engagement with a wider range of internal and external stakeholder groups during the development of new programmes'. In terms of the procedure, proposals for introducing new programmes are, in the first instance, considered internally by the Programme and Curriculum Review Committee, after which these are subjected to the college and university approval processes, and then submitted to the Higher Education Council for licensing. The Panel found that no new programmes have been introduced recently. The Panel is satisfied that the procedure ASU has put in place for the development and approval of new programmes is adequate.
- 5.6 The SER states that at the end of each academic year, an internal self-evaluation report for the BA programme that includes recommendations for the improvement of the programme and courses is developed and submitted to the QAAC. The SER demonstrates a number of ways in which the Department reviews and evaluates the BA programme. These include regular course evaluation reports, student feedback, student satisfaction surveys, alumni and employer surveys, regular departmental council and programme team meetings, external examination and moderation, and a functioning programme Advisory Board. During interview sessions, the faculty members explained the mechanism in place to revise the course specifications, and the cycle to approve the suggestions and changes to the courses. The cycle involves the Programme Coordinator and the Department Council to approve the changes to the course and align it to the programme aims and ILOs. The Panel met with students and alumni who confirmed that they were able to provide feedback on

various aspects relating to the quality of the provision. The academic staff also confirmed that the process of students' evaluation has led to many improvements in the teaching of specific courses. The Panel notes the annual programme review, and encourages the Department to develop a clear follow-up mechanism for ensuring that recommended enhancements are implemented. Moreover, the Panel encourages the Department to revise its programme review mechanism to align its procedure tightly with the ASU curriculum change procedures as specified in the Quality Assurance Manual.

- 5.7 The SER states that in terms of ASU Programme Review Policy, all programmes undergo a review in regular cycles of four years. The review process requires the Programme and Curriculum Review Committee to collect feedback from teaching staff, students and other stakeholders such as employers and alumni of every batch to ascertain the programme relevance and currency, and assure that the PILOs are aligned to the college vision and mission. The Panel was informed during the interviews that the last periodic review was conducted in the academic year 2012-2013 in preparation for this external review. The review conducted in the academic year 2012-2013, the Panel noted, has led to major improvements in the curriculum and programme specifications. The Panel appreciates the frequency and tenacity with which the BA programme is reviewed.
- 5.8 ASU collects regular course evaluations and student feedback near the end of every semester. In addition, the Panel was provided with evidence of surveys conducted recently to seek feedback from employers and alumni. However, these are not conducted regularly. Moreover, because of the small number of alumni responses, the collected data is limited. During interview sessions, the Panel was informed that some of the notable findings from recent surveys have been employers' perception that ASU graduates generally lack good writing and computer skills and also exhibit unsatisfactory problem-solving skills, but show a high propensity to learn on the job. The Panel was informed that actions have been taken in terms of curriculum and course reviews to address these shortcomings. However, the Panel did not see evidence of a formal way that is executed systematically to collect and act upon stakeholders' feedback. The Panel recommends that the College adopt more robust procedures to collect, analyse and respond to stakeholder surveys, and provide timely feedback to the stakeholders on actions taken to address the identified issues
- 5.9 ASU has a Staff Development Centre, which oversees the professional development of academic staff and is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of staff training programmes. In addition, there is an Academic Staff Development Policy that stipulates the basis for an academic staff development budget and also specifies some development initiatives and activities that are supported as part of academic staff professional development. These include providing financial assistance for

conference attendance and financial support and release time for academic staff to upgrade their qualifications or undertake other scholarly activities. During the site visit, the Panel visited the Staff Development Centre. The Panel learned that the Centre ensures that continuous development for faculty members is in place. This is achieved through, annual workshops, participation in professional training, and signing memorandum of understanding with professional bodies. The Centre keeps electronic records for every faculty member who attended professional development activities and trainings. The Staff Development Policy is translated to a yearly plan with allocated budget. A number of the interviewed academic staff confirmed that they have benefited from the staff development programme. The Panel acknowledges the arrangements in place to provide professional development opportunities for faculty members. The appraisal system used also includes a section on the staff training needs. However, the Panel did not see evidence of a formal process to link the professional development needs of the academic staff to the actual activities conducted. The Panel recommends that the College develop and implement a formal mechanism to link the annual performance review process to the professional development activities attended by individual staff members.

- 5.10 The Department relies on internal and external stakeholders to gather intelligence about the local labour market, one of which is the personal experience of its part-time staff members and the external members of the programme Advisory Board, many of whom have several years of experience in the local labour market. In addition, ASU has links through employers and its alumni to market intelligence. However, the Panel was not provided with evidence of a systematic scoping of the labour market. The Panel recommends that the College develop and implement a formal mechanism for contentious scoping of the labour market needs to ensure that the programme is up-to-date and serves the market needs.
- 5.11 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- There is a set of defined policies and procedures that staff members are well informed of and are involved in the development of those that are relevant to their duties.
  - The BA programme is managed in a way that demonstrates effective and responsible leadership.
  - There are effective quality management system and arrangements in relation to the BA programme that are consistently implemented and reviewed.
  - Both academic and support staff have good knowledge and understanding of the quality assurance system used and are committed to ensuring the quality of delivery of the BA programme.
  - There is an effective programme review system that has led to major improvements in the curriculum.

5.12 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- adopt more robust procedures to collect, analyse and respond to stakeholder surveys, and provide timely feedback to the stakeholders on actions taken to address the identified issues
- develop and implement a formal mechanism to link the annual performance review process to the professional development activities attended by individual staff members
- regularly scope the market through a systematic mechanism.

### 5.13 **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance**.

## 6. Conclusion

Taking into account the institution's own self-evaluation report, the evidence gathered from the interviews and documentation made available during the site visit, the Panel draws the following conclusion in accordance with the DHR/QQA *Programmes-within-College Reviews Handbook, 2012*:

**There is confidence in the Bachelor in Accounting programme of the College of Administrative Science offered by the Applied Science University (ASU).**